

Blackpool to push for new convention centre

A new convention centre is vital to Blackpool's future, according to the shadow minister for tourism. And a new casino could be part of such a development, said Tory tourism spokesman Tobias Ellwood during a two-day visit to the Fylde coast.

Mr Ellwood, who is MP for Bournemouth, which already has a successful conference centre, said he was prepared to host a mini tourism summit in Blackpool to see how investment could be brought forward.

He added: „There is clearly an appetite for a major convention centre in Blackpool and I would encourage all those involved in the tourism industry to rally round this idea in order to generate the level of momentum which will encourage investment.

„I would be happy to come back to hold a mini tourism summit to find out what can be done to form a plan and investment for a convention centre.“

Mr Ellwood said that while there was no longer any inclination nationally for a supercasino, a new convention centre could have a casino within it.

He added it could be possible to use gambling permits from other towns and did not rule out the possibility that licences for large and small casinos under the 2005 Gambling Act could be transferred to Blackpool.

Mr Ellwood, who visited the Paris Casino in Station Road, South Shore, during his whistle-stop tour, said: „I am taking away a number of ideas that have been put to me.

„There has been talk of what could be done on the casino front and better utilisation of the airport. There are some issues to do with HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) cropping up in your core tourism areas.

„We are in a difficult economic climate at the moment, but that will end and we will get into more prosperous times.

„We need to use this time to do planning and provide collective agreement as to what needs to be put in place so we are ready for when things improve.“